

World Première
Britten War Requiem



Recorded live at Coventry Cathedral, May 1962 · Previously unpublished

Peter Pears · Heather Harper · Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau
City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra · Melos Ensemble
Meredith Davies · Benjamin Britten



TESTAMENT



Benjamin Britten – 1913-1976

War Requiem, Op.66

In loving memory of

Roger Burney, Sub-Lieutenant, Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve

Piers Dunkerley, Captain, Royal Marines

David Gill, Ordinary Seaman, Royal Navy

Michael Halliday, Lieutenant, Royal New Zealand Naval Volunteer Reserve

Latin texts from Missa pro defunctis · Poems by Wilfred Owen

My subject is War, and the pity of War.

The Poetry is in the pity...

All a poet can do today is warn. (Wilfred Owen)

Requiem aeternam

- | | | |
|---|--|------|
| 1 | Requiem aeternam (chorus & boys' choir) | 5.26 |
| 2 | What passing bells for these who die as cattle? (tenor & chorus) | 3.48 |

Dies irae

- | | | |
|----|--|------|
| 3 | Dies irae (chorus) | 4.12 |
| 4 | Bugles sang (baritone) | 2.14 |
| 5 | Liber scriptus proferetur (soprano & chorus) | 2.58 |
| 6 | Out there, we walked quite friendly up to death (tenor & baritone) | 1.54 |
| 7 | Recordare Jesu pie (chorus) | 4.33 |
| 8 | Be slowly lifted up (baritone) | 2.01 |
| 9 | Dies irae (chorus) | 1.10 |
| 10 | Lacrimosa dies illa (soprano & chorus) | 1.46 |
| 11 | Move him into the sun (tenor, soprano & chorus) | 4.50 |

Offertorium

- | | | |
|----|---|------|
| 12 | Domine Jesu Christe (boys' choir & chorus) | 3.42 |
| 13 | So Abram rose (tenor, baritone, boys' choir & chorus) | 6.19 |

Sanctus

- | | | |
|----|--|------|
| 14 | Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus (soprano & chorus) | 6.03 |
|----|--|------|

- | | | |
|----|---|------|
| 15 | After the blast of lightning (baritone) | 3.48 |
|----|---|------|

Agnus Dei

- | | | |
|----|---------------------------------|------|
| 16 | One ever hangs (tenor & chorus) | 4.05 |
|----|---------------------------------|------|

Libera me

- | | | |
|----|--------------------------------------|------|
| 17 | Libera me, Domine (chorus & soprano) | 6.49 |
|----|--------------------------------------|------|

- | | | |
|----|---|------|
| 18 | It seemed that out of battle I escaped (tenor & baritone) | 9.29 |
|----|---|------|

- | | | |
|----|--|------|
| 19 | Let us sleep now ... In paradisum (baritone, tenor, boys' choir, soprano & chorus) | 5.32 |
|----|--|------|

Recorded in Coventry Cathedral, 30 May, 1962

80.50

Peter Pears – tenor · **Heather Harper** – soprano

Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau – baritone

Coventry Festival Choir · The boys of Holy Trinity, Leamington and Holy Trinity, Stratford

City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra

conducted by **Meredith Davies**

Melos Ensemble

conducted by **Benjamin Britten**

The original recording was made by the BBC

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Front cover photo: The composer and Heather Harper at a rehearsal in Coventry Cathedral

MONO

I. Requiem aeternam

1 Chorus

Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine;
et lux perpetua luceat eis.

Boys

Te decet hymnus, Deus in Sion:
et tibi reddetur votum in Jerusalem;
exaudi orationem meam,
ad te omnis caro veniet.

Chorus

Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine;
et lux perpetua luceat eis.

2 Tenor

What passing bells for these who die as cattle?
Only the monstrous anger of the guns.
Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle
Can patter out their hasty orisons
No mockeries for them from prayers or bells,
Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs, --
The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;
And bugles calling for them from sad shires.
What candles may be held to speed them all?
Not in the hands of boys, but in their eyes
Shall shine the holy glimmers of good-byes.
The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall;
Their flowers the tenderness of silent minds,
And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds.

Chorus

Kyrie eleison
Christe eleison
Kyrie eleison

Chorus

Lord, grant them eternal rest;
and let the perpetual light shine upon them.

Boys

Thou shalt have praise in Zion, oh God:
and homage shall be paid to thee in Jerusalem;
hear my prayer,
all flesh shall come before Thee.

Chorus

Lord, grant them eternal rest;
and let the perpetual light shine upon them.

Chorus

Lord, have mercy upon them
Christ, have mercy upon them
Lord, have mercy upon them

II. Dies irae

3 Chorus

Dies irae, dies illa,
Solvat saeculum in favilla:
Teste David cum Sibylla.
Quantus tremor est futurus,
Quando Judex est venturus,
Cuncta stricte discussurus!
Tuba mirum spargens sonum
Per sepulchra regionum
Coget omnes ante thronum.
Mors stupebit et natura,
Cum resurget creatura,
Judicanti responsura.

4 Baritone

Bugles sang, saddening the evening air;
And bugles answered, sorrowful to hear.
Voices of boys were by the river-side.
Sleep mothered them; and left the twilight sad.
The shadow of the morrow weighed on men.
Voices of old despondency resigned,
Bowed by the shadow of the morrow, slept.

5 Soprano

Liber scriptus proferetur,
In quo totum continetur,
Unde mundus judicetur.
Judex ergo cum sedebit
Quidquid latet, apparebit:
Nil inultum remanebit.

Chorus

Quid sum miser tunc dicturus?
Quem patronem rogaturus,
Cum vix justus sit securus?

Soprano and Chorus

Rex tremendae majestatis,
Qui salvandos salvas gratis,

Chorus

This day, this day of wrath
Shall consume the world in ashes,
As foretold by David and Sibyl.
What trembling there shall be
When the judge shall come
To weigh everything strictly.
The trumpet, scattering its awful sound
Across the graves of all lands
Summons all before the throne.
Death and nature shall be stunned
When mankind arises
To render account before the judge.

Soprano

The written book shall be brought
In which all is contained
Whereby the world shall be judged.
When the judge takes his seat
All that is hidden shall appear:
Nothing will remain unavenged.

Chorus

What shall I, a wretch, say then?
To which protector shall I appeal
When even the just man is barely safe?

Soprano and Chorus

King of awful majesty,
Who freely savest those worthy of salvation,

Salva me, fons pietatis.

6 **Tenor and Baritone**

Out there, we've walked quite friendly up to Death:
Sat down and eaten with him, cool and bland,-
Pardoned his spilling mess-tins in our hand.
We've sniffed the green thick odour of his breath,-
Our eyes wept, but our courage didn't writhe.
He's spat at us with bullets and he's coughed
Shrapnel. We chorused when he sang aloft;
We whistled while he shaved us with his scythe.
Oh, Death was never enemy of ours!
We laughed at him, we leagued with him, old chum.
No soldier's paid to kick against his powers.
We laughed, knowing that better men would come,
And greater wars; when each proud fighter brags
He wars on Death - for Life; not men - for flags.

7 **Chorus**

Recordare Jesu pie,
Quod sum causa tuae viae:
Ne me perdas illa die.
Quarens me, sedisti lassus:
Redemisti crucem passus:
Tantus labor non sit cassus:
Ingemisco, tamquam reus:
Culpa rubet vultus meus:
Supplicanti parce Deus.
Qui Mariam absolvisti,
Et latronem exaudisti,
Mihi quoque spem dedisti.
Inter oves locum praesta,
Et ab haedis me sequestra,
Statuens in parte dextra.
Confutatis maledictis,
Flammis acribus addictis,
Voca me cum benedictis.
Oro supplex et acclinis
Cor contritum quasi cinis
Gere curam mei finis.

Save me, fount of pity.

Chorus

Remember, gentle Jesus,
That I am the reason for Thy time on earth,
Do not cast me out on that day.
Seeking me, Thou didst sink down wearily,
Thou hast saved me by enduring the cross,
Such travail must not be in vain.
I groan, like the sinner that I am,
Guilt reddens my face,
Oh God spare the supplicant.
Thou, who pardoned Mary
And heeded the thief,
Hast given me hope as well.
Give me a place among the sheep
And separate me from the goats,
Let me stand at Thy right hand.
When the damned are cast away
And consigned to the searing flames,
Call me to be with the blessed.
Bowed down in supplication I beg Thee,
My heart as though ground to ashes:
Help me in my last hour.

6

8 **Baritone**

Be slowly lifted up, thou long black arm,
Great gun towering toward Heaven, about to curse;
Reach at that arrogance which needs thy harm,
And beat it down before its sins grow worse;
But when thy spell be cast complete and whole,
May God curse thee, and cut thee from our soul!

9 **Chorus**

Dies irae, dies illa,
Solvat saeculum in favilla:
Teste David cum Sibylla.
Quantus tremor est futurus,
Quando Judex est venturus,
Cuncta stricte discussurus!

10 **Soprano and Chorus**

Lacrimosa dies illa,
Qua resurget ex favilla,
Judicandus homo reus:
Huic ergo parce Deus.

11 **Tenor**

Move him into the sun -
Gently its touch awoke him once,
At home, whispering of fields unsown.
Always it woke him, even in France,
Until this morning and this snow.
If anything might rouse him now
The kind old sun will know.

Soprano and Chorus

Lacrimosa dies illa...

Tenor

Think how it wakes the seeds -
Woke, once, the clays of a cold star.
Are limbs, so dear-achieved, are sides,
Full-nerved - still warm - too hard to stir?
Was it for this the clay grew tall?

7

Chorus

This day, this day of wrath
Shall consume the world in ashes,
As foretold by David and Sibyl.
What trembling there shall be
When the judge shall come
To weigh everything strictly.

Soprano and Chorus

Oh this day full of tears
When from the ashes arises
Guilty man, to be judged:
Oh Lord, have mercy upon him.

Soprano and Chorus

Oh this day full of tears...

Soprano and Chorus

...Qua resurget ex favilla...

Tenor

Was it for this the clay grew tall?

Soprano and Chorus

...Judicandus homo reus.

Tenor

- O what made fatuous sunbeams toil
To break earth's sleep at all?

Chorus

Pie Jesu Domine, dona eis requiem.
Amen.

III. Offertorium**12** **Boys**

Domine Jesu Christe, Rex gloriae,
libera animas omnium fidelium
defunctorum de poenis inferni,
et de profundo lacu:
libera eas de ore leonis, ne absorbeat eas
tartarus, ne cadant in obscurum.

Chorus

Sed signifer sanctus Michael
repraesentet eas in lucem sanctam:
Quam olim Abrahae promisisti,
et semini ejus.

13 **Tenor and Baritone**

So Abram rose, and clave the wood, and went,
And took the fire with him, and a knife.
And as they sojourned both of them together,
Isaac the first-born spake and said, My Father,
Behold the preparations, fire and iron,
But where the lamb for this burnt-offering?
Then Abram bound the youth with belts and straps,

Soprano and Chorus

...When from the ashes arises...

Soprano and Chorus

...Guilty man, to be judged.

Chorus

Gentle Lord Jesus, grant them rest.
Amen.

Boys

Lord Jesus Christ, King of glory,
deliver the souls of the faithful
departed from the pains of hell,
and the bottomless pit:
deliver them from the jaw of the lion, lest hell
engulf them, lest they be plunged into darkness.

Chorus

But let the holy standard-bearer Michael
lead them into the holy light
as Thou didst promise Abraham
and his seed.

And builded parapets and trenches there,
And streched forth the knife to slay his son.
When lo! an angel called him out of heaven,
Saying, Lay not thy hand upon the lad,
Neither do anything to him. Behold,
A ram, caught in a thicket by its horns;
Offer the Ram of Pride instead of him.
But the old man would not so,
but slew his son, -
And half the seed of Europe, one by one.

Boys

Hostias et preced tibi Domine
laudis offerimus; tu suscipe pro
animabus illis, quarum hodie
memoriam facimus: fac eas, Domine,
de morte transire ad vitam.
Quam olim Abrahae promisisti
en semini ejus.

Chorus

...Quam olim Abrahae promisisti
et semini ejus.

IV. Sanctus**14** **Soprano and Chorus**

Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus
Dominus Deus Sabaoth.
Pleni sunt caeli et terra gloria tua,
Hosanna in excelsis.
Sanctus.
Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini.
Hosanna in excelsis.
Sanctus.

15 **Baritone**

After the blast of lightning from the East,
The flourish of loud clouds, the Chariot Throne;
After the drums of time have rolled and ceased,

Boys

Lord, in praise we offer to Thee
sacrifices and prayers, do Thou receive them
for the souls of those whom we remember
this day: Lord, make them pass
from death to life.
As Thou didst promise Abraham
and his seed.

Chorus

...As Thou didst promise Abraham
and his seed.

Soprano and Chorus

Holy, holy, holy
Lord God of hosts.
Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Holy.
Blessed is he who cometh in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.
Holy.

And by the bronze west long retreat is blown,
Shall life renew these bodies? Of a truth
All death will He annul, all tears assuage? -
Fill the void veins of Life again with youth,
And wash, with an immortal water, Age?
When I do ask white Age he saith not so:
"My head hangs weighed with snow."
And when I hearken to the Earth, she saith:
"My fiery heart shrinks, aching. It is death.
Mine ancient scars shall not be glorified,
Nor my titanic tears, the sea, be dried."

V. Agnus Dei

16 Tenor

One ever hangs where shelled roads part.
In this war He too lost a limb,
But His disciples hide apart;
And now the Soldiers bear with Him.

Chorus

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,
dona eis requiem.

Tenor

Near Golgatha strolls many a priest,
And in their faces there is pride
That they were flesh-marked by the Beast
By whom the gentle Christ's denied.

Chorus

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,
dona eis requiem.

Tenor

The scribes on all the people shove
and bawl allegiance to the state,

Chorus

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi...

Chorus

Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world,
grant them rest.

Chorus

Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world,
grant them rest.

Chorus

Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world...

Tenor

But they who love the greater love
Lay down their life; they do not hate.

Chorus

...Dona eis requiem sempiternam.

Tenor

Dona nobis pacem.

VI. Libera me

17 Chorus

Libera me, Domine, de morte aeterna,
in die illa tremenda:
Quando coeli movendi sunt et terra:
Dum veneris judicare saeculum per ignem.

Soprano and Chorus

Tremens factus sum ego, et timeo
dum discussio venerit, atque ventura ira.
Libera me, Domine, de morte aeterna.
Quando coeli movendi sunt i terra.
Dies illa, dies irae, calamitatis
et miseriae, dies magna et amara valde.
Libera me, Domine.

18 Tenor

It seems that out of battle I escaped
Down some profound dull tunnel, long since scooped
Through granites which titanic wars had groined.
Yet also there encumbered sleepers groaned,
Too fast in thought or death to be bestirred.
Then, as I probed them, one sprang up, and stared
With piteous recognition in fixed eyes,
Lifting distressful hands as if to bless.
And no guns thumped, or down the flues made moan.
"Strange friend," I said, "here is no cause to mourn."

Chorus

...Grant them eternal rest.

Tenor

Grant us peace.

Chorus

Deliver me, O Lord, from eternal death
in that awful day
when the heavens and earth shall be shaken
when Thou shalt come to judge the world by fire.

Soprano and Chorus

I am seized with fear and trembling,
until the trial shall be at hand and the wrath to come.
Deliver me, O Lord, from eternal death.
When the heavens and earth shall be shaken.
That day, that day of wrath, of calamity
and misery, a great day and exceeding bitter.
Deliver me, O Lord.

Baritone

"None", said the other, "save the undone years,
 The hopelessness. Whatever hope is yours,
 Was my life also; I went hunting wild
 After the wildest beauty in the world,
 For by my glee might many men have laughed,
 And of my weeping something had been left,
 Which must die now. I mean the truth untold,
 The pity of war, the pity war distilled.
 Now men will go content with what we spoiled.
 Or, discontent, boil bloody, and be spilled.
 They will be swift with swiftness of the tigress,
 None will break ranks, though nations trek from progress.
 Miss we the march of this retreating world
 Into vain citadels that are not walled.
 Then, when much blood had clogged their chariot-wheels
 I would go up and wash them from sweet wells,
 Even from wells we sunk too deep for war,
 Even from the sweetest wells that ever were.
 I am the enemy you killed, my friend.
 I knew you in this dark; for so you frowned
 Yesterday through me as you jabbed and killed.
 I parried; but my hands were loath and cold.
 Let us sleep now..."

19 Boys, then Chorus, then Soprano

In paradisum deducant te Angeli;
 in tuo adventu suscipiant te Martyres,
 et perducant te in civitatem sanctam
 Jerusalem. Chorus Angelorum te suscipiat,
 et cum Lazaro quondam paupere aeternam
 habeas requiem.

Boys

Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine:
 et lux perpetua luceat eis.

Chorus

In paradisum deducant *etc.*

Soprano

Chorus Angeloru, te suscipiat *etc.*

Tenor and Baritone

Let us sleep now.

Chorus

Requiescant in pace. Amen.

Soprano

May the Choir of Angels, *etc.*

Chorus

Let them rest in peace. Amen.

SBT 1490



Peter Pears & Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau at a rehearsal